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The focus is a method of preparing (ie. printing)
~~scroll~~ a Jewish scroll involving a manual
step (by hand) of placing letters on the scroll.

<u>Synonyms</u>	<u>Keywords</u>
<u>scroll book</u>	<u>Jewish sacred Tefillin</u>
<u>document</u>	<u>Judaism holy</u>
<u>parchment</u>	<u>Judaic Torah</u>
<u>paper</u>	<u>Judaistic Megillah</u>
<u>substrate</u>	<u>Kosher Mezzuzah (also</u>
	<u>mezuzah)</u>

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 Searcher: Anne Kraduckson
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 Searcher Location: STIC-EIC2800, CP4-9C18
 Date Searcher Picked Up: 5/5/02
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Type of Search
 Structure (#) _____
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THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

May 21, 1999 Friday MORNING EDITION

SECTION: METRO; Pg. B01

LENGTH: 602 words

HEADLINE: Irvine congregation welcomes new **Torah**;
FAITH: The \$ 40,000 calfskin **scroll**, which took an Israeli scribe a year to pen by **hand**, represents the heart of **Jewish** life.

BYLINE: CAROL McGRAW, The Orange County Register

BODY:

One slip of the turkey quill and a year's work would go down the drain.

Hunched over a table, delicately dipping his quill into an ink pot, Rabbi Shimon Kraft, a Torah scribe from Los Angeles, completed the last passages of Deuteronomy on the calfskin scroll. His **hand** was steady as he traced the Hebrew **letters**.

The crowd at Beth Jacob Congregation in Irvine pressed precariously close to his arm, overcome with the excitement of having their first new Torah _ the Holy Scriptures of Judaism. Previously, the 13-year-old congregation read from borrowed Torahs and owned two "very used" ones, said Beth Jacob Rabbi Joel Landau.

The Torah, which comprises the five books of Moses, was **handwritten** in Israel by another scribe who labored a year to create the \$ 40,000 scroll. The Torah contains 5,845 verses, 79,976 words and 304,805 **letters**. Scribes are called sofars in Hebrew, which means counters. They must count each **letter**. If one is missing, or there are too many and it can't be fixed, the Torah must be buried.

The scroll, about 2 1/2 feet long, is swathed in "garments" _ a crown and breastplate. The rabbi reads from it at services.

Before the final passages were penned, Kraft sewed sections together with sinew. Materials must come from kosher animals.

Thursday's event marked Beth Jacob's 13th anniversary and the start of Shavuot, the two-day commemoration of God's giving Moses the Ten Commandments.

Some members of the congregation got to hold the quill Thursday evening. A few brave ones drew over the Hebrew **letters**, already traced there by the scribe in Israel.

The words they completed were from Deuteronomy 34:10-12, which sums up the life of Moses, the prophet who led the Jewish people

out of bondage in Egypt and to the Promised Land:

In part, it says: "And there arose not a prophet like Moses since in Israel, who knew God face to face. No one else will be able to reproduce the signs and miracles that God let him display ."

Yitzhak Halberstam, an Irvine teacher, traced a word from that passage. "It was such a feeling of holiness to do that," Halberstam said.

The scroll was carried from a social hall to the sanctuary, with the crowd singing "Moses is true, the Torah is true. "

The Torah was passed under a canopy, honored like a bride at a Jewish wedding. Inside, it was placed in the ark, the cabinet where it is kept between services. If it is well cared for, this Torah can be used for more than 200 years. Some rare ones are 900 years old.

According to Jewish belief, the Torah was dictated to Moses by God sometime around 1220 BCE.

That the congregation is celebrating both Shavuot and the homecoming of its Torah is significant. Besides the Ten Commandments given to Moses, Judaism has 603 other commandments, all derived from those original ten. One of those commandments is to write a Torah scroll, Landau explained.

"If you can't write one, you can have someone do it for you, and thereby participate by helping with the purchase," Landau noted. It is scripturally satisfactory for an individual to buy even one **letter**.

The enthusiastic effort to bring the Torah to Irvine actually netted the congregation \$ 225,000. The money will go to expand the congregation campus at 3900 Michaelson Drive.

Basil Luck, 60, an Irvine resident who headed the effort, said helping obtain the Torah has been a significant spiritual moment in his life. "The Torah is the basis of how you live _ how you deal with yourself, your fellow man, and God. "

GRAPHIC: BLACK & WHITE PHOTO; REJOICING; Members of Beth Jacob Congregation encircle Rabbi Schmuel Feld, center, as they celebrate their new Torah on Thursday, the eve of Shavuot, when Moses received the Ten Commandments.

LOAD-DATE: May 27, 1999

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Copyright 1999 The Florida Times-Union
The Florida Times-Union (Jacksonville, FL)

February 8, 1999 Monday, City Edition

SECTION: METRO; Pg. B-1

LENGTH: 509 words

HEADLINE: Torah inspectors scrutinize scrolls;
It can't be read unless it's kosher

BYLINE: Dana Treen, Times-Union staff writer

BODY:

With deft **hands** and a practiced eye, Israeli Yitzchak Shteiner pored over the long parchment scroll yesterday at Beth Shalom Congregation, pausing here and there for closer study.

'This Torah was written 80 years ago in Poland,' he said matter-of-factly, though no date, place, or artisan's name appeared on the sacred, **hand-lettered** Hebrew text of the first five books of Moses.

As caretakers of Jewish tradition, Shteiner and fellow scribes Yitzchak Goldstein of Israel and Zerach Greenfield of New York were in Jacksonville yesterday to visit six Jewish centers that invited the men to assess Torahs used in services. 'It's the central element of Judaism,' Greenfield said of the Torah's importance. During a year, a rabbi recites a portion from the Torah at each service, reading the scroll from beginning to end.

In inspections like those yesterday, scrolls found not to be kosher -- or adhering to rules of condition that make them equal to other Torahs the world over -- cannot be used for services unless they are repaired or restored.

At Beth Shalom Congregation, where five Torah scrolls were inspected, one was considered unrepairable. Three others can be fixed at a cost of about \$ 10,000.

A fourth, transcribed 200 years ago in Germany, remained kosher.

For the past dozen years, Shteiner and Goldstein have operated the non-profit Machon Ot, or Institute of **Letters**, where salvageable scrolls are cleaned and washed with chemicals then reinked using traditional pigments derived from oak leaves. The most delicate work is done in Israel, where Machon Ot has its main office.

Scribed by **hand** on sections of goatskin, calfskin or sheepskin parchment that could stretch half the length of a football field, each Torah scroll has 300,000 **letters** that must be perfectly reproduced each time a Torah is copied.

Keeping the Torah kosher means those **letters** may not show the damage of age or have splits between sheets of parchment.

'Even if one **letter** is cracking you cannot read from that Torah' in services, Shteiner said.

But within those rules are allowances that make each scroll singular. The signposts of age

and origin of a Torah lie in the nuances of tradition, materials and style.

'In every **letter**, there are about 20 laws about how to write that **letter**,' Shteiner said. Influences of things like Spanish style or Russian ink also distinguish the scrolls.

Because of their value, both sacred and monetary, Machon Ot is developing a data base of scrolls that can be used by law enforcement agencies worldwide to identify Torahs that may be stolen.

A new Torah can cost \$ 25,000 to \$ 30,000, said Beth Shalom Rabbi Gary Perras.

By photocopying one of several sections of a scroll, that Torah's individual **characteristics** show up as distinctly as a fingerprint, Greenfield said.

'There is absolutely no way to tell where this fingerprinting is,' he said.

Now, the data base has 8,000 to 9,000 Torahs identified, he said. Once 30,000 are entered, the system will become useful as a tracking tool.

GRAPHIC: Photos by Bob Self/staff 1. Photo: (c) Yitzchak Shteiner (left) and Yitzchak Goldstein inspect a Torah at Beth Shalom Congregation for wear and damage that would render it unusable. 2. Photo: (c) Yitzchak Shteiner works with the non-profit Machon Ot, or Institute of **Letters**, where salvageable scrolls are cleaned.

LOAD-DATE: February 09, 1999

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Copyright 1994 The Dallas Morning News
THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

May 23, 1994, Monday, HOME FINAL EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 15A

LENGTH: 646 words

HEADLINE: Synagogue completes **Sefer Torah**;
Congregants get a chance to take part in sacred ritual

BYLINE: Randy Lee Loftis, Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

BODY:

Ethel Frankfurt watched as the scribe filled in a Hebrew **letter** and fulfilled an ancient commandment.

Ms. Frankfurt stood Sunday afternoon at the front of her synagogue, one of about 3,000 people who took part in a sacred ritual Thursday night and all day Sunday.

Congregation Shearith Israel was completing a new Sefer Torah, a scroll that unites Jews to history and to each other. The Torah, comprising the first five books of the Bible, is the scripture that has sustained Jews and Judaism through centuries. It is rare for Jews to have the chance to participate in the writing of a Sefer Torah - a **handwritten** copy required for readings in a synagogue.

The scripture's 613th and final commandment tells each generation to write down the Torah. But since the task can take 1,500 hours and involves complex rituals and special tools, it is generally left to trained scribes.

Sunday's ritual allowed ordinary congregants to fulfill the commandment.

"The scroll is the heart and soul of Judaism," said Senior Rabbi Jordan S. Ofseyer, who had never seen a Sefer Torah completed before. "It is the very core of everything that Judaism is."

Ms. Frankfurt, an interior designer, designed the case where a replica of the new Torah will be permanently displayed. The original will remain in the ark, a repository for the scroll.

"We are doing this for our children and our grandchildren," she said after her moment with the sofer, or scribe, who filled in final **letters** on behalf of each family.

Each step is prescribed by ritual. The scroll is made of parchment from the skin of a kosher animal. The sections are bound by kosher sinews.

Only quill pens are used. No metal such as iron or steel may ever touch the scroll, Rabbi Ofseyer explained, because they have always been used to make weapons - and writing a Torah is an act of peace.

The name of God is written with a quill used only for that word.

No two **letters** in the Torah may touch each other. "They are like members of the family that are separate individuals but still are close to each other," said Dr. Eric Ray, a rabbi and sofer from New York who prepared the scroll.

The 110-year-old congregation in North Dallas started planning 18 months ago for its first new Sefer Torah in 50 years.

Members carefully selected part of the scripture - a word, a passage, a book or the entire scroll - for their personal dedications.

"My in-laws chose a verse dealing with the love they have for each other," said Janet Beck, co-chair of the effort. Choosing the passage "brings the Torah to you in a personal way," she said.

Rabbi Issur Oppenheim began the writing in Israel, then passed the work to Dr. Ray, who on Sunday afternoon sat in the synagogue and carefully filled in final **letters**.

Each family **handed** Dr. Ray a quill pen that he dipped into a bottle of ritually prepared ink. By touching the quill and allowing the scribe to write a **letter** on their behalf, they fulfilled the mitzvah, or commandment.

Dr. Ray sang the name of each **letter** and the word that it completed. He led each family in the Shehecheyanu, a blessing that praises God.

During a break, Dr. Ray said the Torah proves that God's covenant with the Jewish people is still in effect.

"It is considered by us to be the actual words of God that were **handed** down to Moses," he said. "It's a reminder of that covenant when you read that Torah."

The scroll was finished Sunday night during a Siyum HaTorah ("finishing the Torah") ceremony. The Torah was placed under a chuppah, or wedding canopy, to be honored as a bride would be. And as with a wedding, a reception followed.

The Torah will serve for decades as a physical and spiritual symbol, said Rabbi Ofseyer.

"We have been the beneficiaries of the gifts of previous generations," he said. "Now we are to be the benefactors of future generations."

GRAPHIC: PHOTO(S): Dr. Eric Ray, a Torah scribe from New York, fills in Hebrew **lettering** on the new scroll received Sunday at Congregation Shearith Israel in North Dallas. Each generation is obligated to write down the Torah. Since the task can take 1,500 hours and involves special rituals and tools, it is usually left to trained scribes. The scroll is made of parchment from the skin of a kosher animal. (The Dallas Morning News: David Leeson)

LOAD-DATE: June 1, 1994

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Ethnic NewsWatch
Baltimore Jewish Times

August 20, 1993

SECTION: Vol. 212; No. 8; Pg. 23

SLI-ACC-NO: 1093BJLR 025 000009

LENGTH: 1062 words

HEADLINE: The **Scroll** Masters: As the High Holy Days approach, scribes who work on **Jewish** religious texts are in demand.

BYLINE: Schiffrin, Daniel

BODY:

The Scroll Masters: As the High Holy Days approach, scribes who work on Jewish religious texts are in demand.

The period leading up to the High Holy Days is a time when Jews customarily take stock of their spiritual state. Traditional Jews also check the state of their tefillin, mezuzot, Torahs and other religious texts to make sure they're still "kosher." And it is the scribes, soferim in Hebrew, who do the checking. For them, the High Holy Days is also high season.

"It's customary to check tefillin and mezuzot twice in seven years," said Rabbi Shlomo Naiman, a 34-year-old Ner Israel graduate student, one of five scribes who write and/or check Jewish religious texts in Baltimore.

Of the five, only one, Rabbi Binyomin Spiro, works full-time. The others, like Rabbi Moshe Rappaport, who works primarily as a mohel, spend only part of their time as scribes.

And even though five soferim is a substantial number for a city of Baltimore's size, an increasing observant population and the age of many Torahs (most of which come from pre-World War II Europe) means there is always a great deal of work for them -- High Holy Days or not.

"The city is adequately covered," said Rabbi Spiro, who, like all the local scribes, works out of his home. "What gets tougher to **handle** are the outlying areas like Silver Spring and D.C.," where there are no scribes.

Most major Jewish communities have a scribe, although the majority of the work is now done in Israel.

Safrus, or the writing of holy texts, is an ancient art that goes back to the first scribes, Moses and Ezra. Jewish law prescribes strict rules for how certain holy works -- the Torah, the five megillot, or special scrolls, and the passages for tefillin and mezuzot -- must be written. Most of these laws can be

"Most of the problems I find are those that are there from the beginning, not those that arise later," said Rabbi Yosef Cotton, a local scribe who says he specializes in "house calls" to check mezuzot and tefillin. A well-done mezuzah, he says, should last a lifetime.

Fixing a holy text is complicated, and scribes refer to a wealth of laws and customs describing how words and **letters** can be repaired and under what circumstances. For instance, one can't erase part of one **letter** in order to create another, an easy and undetectable short-cut. The entire **letter** must be erased, with a razor blade or an eraser, and written again.

"If any **letter** is no longer the way it's supposed to be, you can't fix any of it," said Rabbi Axelman, 35. "If a **letter** were cracked more than a hair, or if it were smudged, or if two **letters** touch...it's unreadable cannot be used."

If any of the holy texts are found to have unfixable flaws, they are buried.

Technology is also playing a larger part in scribes' lives. For instance, many use an electric eraser, which works faster and better than manual erasers or knives. Recently, a computer program was developed in Israel to check errors in the Torah. It works by comparing a newly completed Torah with a copy of the text in its memory, noting any missing or repeated **letters**.

"The computer can't check incorrect formation of **letters**, or run-offs, or other problems," said Rabbi Spiro. "The program was never intended to be the only check. A scribe must carefully check it over as well."

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JOURNAL-CODE: BJ

LOAD-DATE: August 17, 2001

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Ethnic NewsWatch
Baltimore Jewish Times

August 20, 1993

SECTION: Vol. 212; No. 8; Pg. 23

SLI-ACC-NO: 1093BJLR 025 000009

LENGTH: 1062 words

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BYLINE: Schifrin, Daniel

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found in the Talmud tractate Menochat, and in numerous commentaries. For a written document to be "kosher," it must follow these prescribed rules (non-kosher texts for **mezuzot** and other such items are also available, largely in the non-observant community).

Usually written with a turkey feather-quill pen on parchment prepared from the skin of a kosher animal, safrus is not only an art but a religious commitment as well. Although scribes receive an ordination called kabbalah, most are also rabbis, and well-versed in the laws and spiritual preparation needed to copy a holy book.

"You can't be preoccupied with anything when you are writing. No music or distractions," said Rabbi Naiman, who was spending part of a recent afternoon writing a Book of Esther, the non-Torah scroll most often written by hand. His set-up was simple: a slanted drawing table, the animal-skin parchment, a quill and a small bottle of ink.

The need for concentration is great, said Rabbi Naiman, and in his quiet downstairs study he can focus not just on the form of the letters, but on the meaning of the words as well.

"You have to concentrate when you are writing the name of God," he said, noting that entire books have been written about how to prepare for and write the different names of God in the Torah. "If you are distracted, the Torah is invalidated and the sheet of parchment must be replaced."

A sheet of Torah is four columns of 42 lines each -- about 25 hours of work. To complete an entire Torah takes about a year.

The reputation of a scribe rests not only on his skill but also on his perceived concentration and spiritual level.

"You have to trust a scribe," said Rabbi Naiman. "You can't look at a parchment afterward and see what his intentions were."

As respected as safrus may be in the traditional community, it is not particularly well-paying.

"It's very tedious, and it's not easy to make a living," said Rabbi Naiman, who estimated he could sell a scroll of Esther for 200. At 40-45 hours of work, that means he grosses around 5 an hour. With a mezuzah, he added, two-and-one-half hours of work could bring in about 30, meaning a higher hourly wage.

There are many reasons why "kosher" scrolls and other items must be checked on a periodic basis. For one, humidity or dampness can make the ink run, blurring letters together. Age also wears out the letters in some parts of the parchment, with the work done by a less skilled scribe or written on inferior material degenerating more rapidly.

Local soferim interviewed all noted that because religious texts, particularly Torahs, tend to be old, they should probably all be checked. Rabbi Tzvi Axelman, whose specialty is the writing of **mezuzot and tefillin**, said that over the last decade, "perhaps 50 to 60 percent" of those items checked have been found to be not kosher.

"Most of the problems I find are those that are there from the beginning, not those that arise later," said Rabbi Yosef Cotton, a local scribe who says he specializes in "house calls" to check **mezuzot and tefillin**. A well-done mezuzah, he says, should last a lifetime.

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JOURNAL-CODE: BJ

LOAD-DATE: August 17, 2001

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Copyright 2000 The Hearst Corporation
The Times Union (Albany, NY)

May 27, 2000, Saturday, ONE STAR EDITION

SECTION: RELIGION, Pg. B10

LENGTH: 690 words

HEADLINE: Community to write a sacred **scroll**

BYLINE: RABBI MOSHE BOMZER

BODY:

The Torah is the most cherished legacy of the Jewish people. It has been handwritten and scribed from generation to generation for the past 3,500 years from the year 2448 to our current year in the Jewish calendar, 5760. According to Jewish traditions, Moses presented this scroll in its entirety at the end of the 40-year trek of the Jewish people through the desert of Sinai. Throughout Jewish history, Jews have lived by the Torah and died for it.

The Torah represents the heart and soul of the Jewish people. It contains all the laws, explanations and traditions we are commanded to follow as a Jewish people. The sages handed down the Torah from generation to generation after Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. The Torah is also known as the Five Books of Moses. The five books are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Genesis tells us about the history of man and the development of the Jewish people.

Exodus tells us the saga of the Jewish people, the tabernacle and the story of Sinai as well as its aftermath.

Leviticus tells us about ritual law and regulation -- the Jewish nation as a holy people.

Numbers tells us the saga of the 40 years in the desert with all its trials, tribulations, triumphs and tragedies.

Deuteronomy tells us the laws and history as presented by Moses as his last will and testament. There are 613 Mitzvot (good deeds) in the Torah. The first is to have children, the last is to participate in the writing of a Torah and all the commandments in between are tied to these two ends. If a person cannot write a Torah, then they can participate with as little as one letter to fulfill this Mitzvah.

At Congregation Beth Abraham-Jacob, we are celebrating the Torah with a community spirit. For the first time in more than 75 years, a Torah is being written in the greater Capital District for the residents and by the residents.

The scribe we hired, Aharon Noiman, is writing the Torah for this area in El Kanah, Israel. It takes approximately one year to write a complete Torah. The scribe must be a pious, G-d-fearing individual. He must know the nuance of all legal requirements, be an expert craftsman and be meticulous in his penmanship, spacing and uniformity of writing style. This writing style is a true art form and the scribe we hired is truly an artist. The precision of written letter, the curvature of each letter, although insignificant, is what differentiates the Torah scroll from ordinary texts.

The writing implement the scribe uses is a simple turkey or goose feather that is cut and dipped in a natural ink made from bushes and flowers. The parchment must be made from the hide of kosher animals (usually a young calf) that have been prepared specifically for this purpose. The Torah is made from 62 pieces of hide with each sheet containing three to five columns of script.

Once completed, these parchments are sewn together with the dried sinews and tendons of a kosher animal. The text is then checked by an outside authority and **computer**-analyzed for exactness and perfection. We are encouraging anyone in the greater Capital District who would like to participate to take us up on what could be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We hope you will join us in this wonderful celebration and a rare experience for you or your family. The dedication of the new Torah scroll will take place at 2:30 a.m. Sunday, June 25. The assembled will join in song, celebration and spirit highlighting the words, the text, the students and the teachers of the Torah. Cantor Usher Fogel will lead the procession with music and fanfare as the final letters are put into place in our main sanctuary on Whitehall Road in Albany. When the Torah is rolled up, a new cover of fine purple linen will be placed over it.

The very text is holy and is handled gingerly with sanctity of mind and body. Little did I think that one day I would participate in the writing of a **Sefer** Torah for my family, my synagogue, the city and county of Albany -- and yet dreams do come true. Bomzer is rabbi of Congregation Beth Abraham-Jacob in Albany.

LOAD-DATE: June 1, 2000

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Pensacola News Journal

February 19, 1999 Friday

SECTION: LIFE; Pg. 1B

LENGTH: 920 words

HEADLINE: Scribe brings **Torah scroll** home

BYLINE: Alice Crann, Staff

BODY:

Pensacola's Temple Beth El awaits the return of this holy object that has been restored

By Alice Crann

News Journal staff writer

Neil Yerman hunches over Hebrew words for a living.

The sofer and artist in New York City has restored hundreds of Torah scrolls for Jewish congregations across the country and abroad, and he has even written original Torah scrolls.

"Just call us 'Scrolls Are Us,'" he jokingly said during a telephone interview from his studio.

A sofer is a ritual scribe who works in the Jewish tradition. A Torah scroll is a handwritten copy of the five books of Moses, written with a quill pen on lamb or goatskin parchment. The **Sefer** Torah (Hebrew for Torah scroll) is the holiest object in a Jewish synagogue and must be prepared according to ancient holy procedures.

Since August, Yerman and a team of scribes have been restoring a **Sefer** Torah from Temple Beth El on Palafox Street. Yerman will return the scroll today and present several programs over the weekend about the ancient scribal arts he practices.

Temple Beth El's scroll is a Sephardic scroll written on coated goatskin; it's between 75 and 85 years old.

"If I say so myself, we did a beautiful job," Yerman said. "The scroll underwent quite a normal restoration process. We sewed some seams, trimmed some tears, and cleaned it.

"We examined every single letter in the Torah to make sure all parts of the letters were connected and black. Using a quill pen, we restored letters that were cracked or chipped."

Sofers don't change a word. When they write an original, they copy from a scroll exactly the way it is written.

"A sofer may never write a word of Torah from memory; each word must be copied," Yerman explained. "All Torah scrolls must be written by hand, never by **computer**."

It takes at least one concentrated year of activity to write a Torah scroll, but some scribes take two to three years to write one, Yerman said.

Imagine this: When a Torah scroll is unrolled, it is half the length of a football field.

Yerman said a Torah scroll can last for centuries, if it's properly contained. And restoration costs vary.

"If a Torah scroll has not been restored within a decade or two or three, the average price to completely restore it is usually several thousand dollars, but it can be more," he said.

Maintenance is important for various reasons, said Yerman, who said he believes each Torah belongs to its congregation and who encourages participation in all the writing, restoration and learning process.

"I teach in many congregations, all ages from pre-K to senior citizens, about the physical Torah - how it was written, how it can be restored, and what happens if it can't be restored. If this occurs, it is buried in a special chamber in a cemetery.

"The Torah scroll is not just a document," Yerman said. "It's all the teachings, strivings and songs of the children of Israel. Every Torah is holy in that respect. It's important for every Jewish person to come as close as possible to this wonderful heritage."

Rabbi David Ostrich, leader of the 125-year-old Temple Beth El, said he and his can't wait to see the restored **Sefer** Torah, one of two used at the Temple.

"The scrolls lie at the heart of our congregation's spirituality; we are very much looking forward to the return of our Torah," he said. "We are especially proud of our Sisterhood for sponsoring this holy restoration."

The purpose of Temple Beth El's Sisterhood is to foster and further the highest ideals of Judaism; foster religious, educational, social and charitable usefulness of the Temple, said Margaret Wein, the Sisterhood's first vice-president.

"We sponsored the restoration because our Temple is so important to us," Wein said. "If there is a need, we want to fill it."

PHOTO

Neil Yerman has restored hundreds of Torah scrolls for Jewish congregations across the country and abroad, and he has even written original Torah scrolls.

BREAK OUT BOX

"The Torah scroll is not just a document. It's all the teachings, strivings and songs of the children of Israel. Every Torah is holy in that respect. It's important for every Jewish person to come as close as possible to this wonderful heritage."

- Neil Yerman, Torah scribe

ABOUT THE HEBREW BIBLE

The Jewish Bible is often called the Hebrew Bible because most of it was written in Hebrew; Christians call the Hebrew Bible the Old Testament.

The Hebrew Bible calls a special people to enter into covenant relation with the God of justice and steadfast love and to bring God's law to the nations. It consists of 24 books that

are organized into three parts - the Law (Pentateuch), the Prophets, and the Writings.

Torah is the Hebrew name for the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. According to tradition, the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were written by Moses based on revelations from God.

The Pentateuch, the oldest part of the Bible, presents a continuous story from the Creation to the death of Moses and the preparation of the Israelites to enter Canaan.

In traditional Judaism and Christianity, the Bible has been more than a historical document to be preserved or a classic of literature to be cherished and admired; it is recognized as the unique record of God's dealings with people over the ages.

WANT TO GO?

WHAT: Program by Neil Yerman, a Torah scribe from New York.

WHEN: 1 p.m. Sunday. Open to the public.

WHERE: Temple Beth El, 800 N. Palafox.

DETAILS: 438-3321.

LOAD-DATE: April 15, 2002

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Ethnic NewsWatch
Jewish Bulletin

September 26, 1997

SECTION: Vol. 101; No. 38; Pg. 5

SLI-ACC-NO: 1297CJLS 071 000025

LENGTH: 634 words

HEADLINE: Torah helps launch weekday services in downtown S.F.

BYLINE: Seto, Doug

BODY:

Torah helps launch weekday services in downtown S.F.

DOUG SETO

Bulletin Correspondent

With the donation of a new Torah, Chabad of S.F. will institute downtown San Francisco's first weekday morning Orthodox services in five years, enabling the group to serve visitors as well as businesspeople seeking a daily sunrise minyan.

Monday's service honoring the new Torah drew visiting rabbis from as far away as New York City. Celebrants expressed delight as they saw the 40,000 Torah and the two silver crowns that adorn it. The Torah was donated by Jacob Schechter, owner of three Chinatown emporiums specializing in art, statuary, and jade and ivory products, and his brother Manny. In keeping with halachah, the Schechters close their stores on Friday nights, Saturdays and on Jewish holidays.

"Jacob Schechter was the first to close his store on the Sabbath, the busiest day of the week for the retail businessman," said Chabad of S.F. Rabbi Yosef Langer.

Halachah demands that Monday and Thursday Shacharit services require a reading from the Torah, according to Langer. Since 1990, Orthodox Shabbat and holiday morning and evening services have been held downtown at Congregation Keneseth Israel on Sutter Street. But after the High Holy Days, weekday Orthodox morning services will take place at Chabad, which is at 468 Bush Street, near the gate of Chinatown and close to the Financial District.

Langer said the presence of the Torah now allows the Chabad center to serve tourists, conventioners and visiting businesspeople as well as those who work downtown. He also hopes to serve the approximately 150 Israelis who work in the shops of Chinatown, Powell Street, Market Street and Fisherman's Wharf.

He also anticipates bagel breakfasts, lunch-and-learn programs, beginning prayer and alef-beit classes, and a late-Saturday-evening music cafe featuring musical performances by Langer, who calls himself "the Grateful Yid."

One year ago, Jacob and Manny Schechter decided to have a Torah inscribed in honor of their parents, who live in Tel Aviv. They commissioned a renowned Jerusalem scribe. When the Torah was finished, a **computer scanner** was used to check whether any Hebrew letters touched each other or were missing, chipped or cracked. If so, the whole Torah would be unfit for use.

Besides striving for mechanical perfection, "a scribe is expected to immerse himself in the mikveh and to possess holy thoughts while writing the Torah," Langer said.

When complete, the handcrafted Torah was sent to Tel Aviv, where Schechter's parents could see it. Then it was sent to Chabad.

The Schechters "have done so much to bring Jewish life to the downtown community," said Langer, who in an effort to host downtown services some years ago used to borrow a Torah from various sources, load it into his car and drive around the city gathering Jews willing to join a minyan.

The Schechter brothers, Langer added, "support Chabad, are traditional Jews and have been examples to others that are often smothered in the throngs of the business community."

Rabbi Herschel Yolles, the head of the Saborer Chassidim and a direct descendant of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, attended Monday's service. He honored both the new Torah and the Schechter brothers.

Aged Russian immigrants, teenage boys and middle-aged men donned **tefillin**, and Langer and Schechter read from the Torah. Then everyone danced around the bimah, with Yolles in front, embracing the new Torah in his arms.

"It was one of the Schechters' hopes that we start a regular morning minyan," Langer said.

Article copyright San Francisco Jewish Community Publications, Inc.

GRAPHIC: Photo, Jacob Schechter and Rabbi Yosef Langer

JOURNAL-CODE: CJ

LOAD-DATE: August 17, 2001

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The Associated Press

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August 19, 1981, Wednesday, PM cycle

SECTION: Domestic News

LENGTH: 406 words

HEADLINE: Code Dots In Invisible Ink To Help Fight **Torah** Thefts

BYLINE: By RICK HAMPSON, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: NEW YORK

BODY:

A wave of torah thefts has forced Jewish groups to abandon 3,300 years of tradition and institute a registration system under which the sacred religious scrolls are marked in invisible ink.

"The theft of a torah is a travesty of the highest order," Rabbi Israel Miller, chairman of the group that developed the registration system, said Tuesday. "The sanctuary used to be a refuge. Unfortunately, this is no longer so." More than 80 torahs have been stolen from New York synagogues already this year -- more than twice the total for all of last year -- and Jewish leaders say thefts are on the rise around the nation and in Israel.

Torahs are hand-copied on parchment by scribes using special ink and quills. By ancient tradition, they contain nothing but the Hebrew words of the first five books of the Old Testament.

The scrolls, most of them stolen in burglaries at older, smaller temples, are resold to unsuspecting congregations in the United States and abroad, according to the New York police.

The plan for the Universal Torah Registry calls for identifying code dots to be marked on the scrolls, Jewish leaders said at a police headquarters news conference.

Despite its break with tradition, Miller said the registration plan had been embraced by leaders of the orthodox, conservative and reform branches of Judaism. The method will be used in the United States and Canada and eventually Israel.

A scribe, Rabbi Michael Fuld of Queens, explained that religious scholars gave their blessing to the plan for two reasons: It employs symbolic dots instead of letters or numbers, and the dots are invisible.

Torahs' margins will be **stamped** with a series of dots, the arrangement and number of which indicate the nationality (American, Canadian or Israeli), telephone number and registration number of the synagogue which owned and filed the scroll.

The code, visible only over an ultra-violet light, will enable congregations wanting to buy a torah to check with the torah registry to make sure the document is neither stolen nor forged, Miller said.

The registry will be operated by a private information firm and supervised by a Jewish organization based in Brooklyn.

The theft of scrolls increased this year as thieves discovered a market for them, Police Commissioner Robert McGuire said.

A used torah costs between \$5,000 and \$10,000 and a new one between \$10,000 and \$20,000, officials said.

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SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE

February 26, 1999, Friday INDIANA, MICHIGAN, MISHAWAKA, PHM, TRIBUNE

SECTION: FAITH, Pg. c1

LENGTH: 651 words

HEADLINE: Drawing on Esther's wisdom
Gilat Omer inscribed and decorated the Book of Esther on a handmade paper **scroll**

BYLINE: MARTIN DeAGOSTINO; Tribune Staff Writer

BODY: SOUTH BEND -- Reading the Book of Esther in public is mandatory during Purim, the merriest of all Jewish festivals.

South Bend resident and Israeli citizen Gilat Omer has taken the commandment one step further. She has written the entire book in Hebrew script on a paper scroll that she made herself and decorated with **silk-screened** figures and designs.

Omer made the scroll, called a megillah, as part of her honors project for a bachelor of fine arts degree in design from Indiana University South Bend. The project also included a research paper about the Book of Esther, which Omer admits to never having liked very much. Why not?

Esther, says Omer, is a sort-of bimbo who is manipulated by her uncle into entering a beauty contest to join the harem of King Ahasuerus. Once in the harem, Esther seduces the king to get her way.

While Esther's actions turned out well for the Jews--it saved them from destruction by the king's second-in-command, the evil Haman--the queen's "qualifications" for her role seem more about beauty than brains. As Esther 2:7 says, "the girl had a good figure and a beautiful face."

But Omer's perceptions changed once she decided to make the megillah. "The experience of writing (it) made me want to study (it)," she says.

Through study, Omer realized that Esther grows in wisdom as she determines how best to reach the king and influence him. More importantly, Omer decided that the unknown author of the text had hidden a lesson for the ages inside a melodrama.

That lesson: the necessity of language and literacy for oppressed people. As Omer puts it, the book of Esther emphasizes the importance of "text as a tool of survival."

Consider Hebrew, which is the language of daily life in Omer's Israel. Hebrew was an archaic language, reserved for prayer, study and ritual, until Zionist pioneers decided to make it a foundation for a new political state.

"It could be done because they kept it (as) a language people could study," Omer says. "And it's become a living thing with swear words and slang and everything."

Omer's megillah has dynamic aspects as well.

The scroll is the byproduct of several whimsical prints Omer had made, some of which she

named for figures from Esther. When the time came for Omer's honors project, the prints suggested a project based on the biblical text.

The megillah also represents an exacting physical process that involved papermaking, calligraphy, **silk-screening**, platemaking and printing. Because Omer didn't know how to make paper, she spent hours learning the craft before she could advance her project.

"That wasn't my main purpose to make paper," Omer says. "It just ended up being my main time occupation."

Omer wrote the text of her megillah in 14 vertical columns that read from right to left, as all Hebrew text does. Her calligraphy contains a few surprises, however.

Whenever she wrote Esther's name, Omer included an arc of seven dots to suggest the moon goddess Ishtar, whose name survives in the word "Esther."

And whenever she wrote the name of the story's black hat--Haman--she wrote it "really crooked."

Omer's calligraphic devices are consistent with the festival of Purim, when the normal order is reversed and altered. Revelers don masks and play-act; students lead rabbis, instead of vice versa; and women are allowed to write and read the megillah.

"It's really a time of barriers melting away and switching," Omer says.

Festival of Purim

Sundown Monday through sundown Tuesday

(Adar 14 on the Jewish calendar)

Purim, based on the Book of Esther, celebrates a time when the historical persecution of the Jews was reversed.

Modern celebrations of the ancient festival include masquerades and the eating of poppy seed cookies called hamantaschen.

Gilat Omer's "Megilat Esther" will be on display at Temple Beth-El, 305 W. Madison St., through March 8.

GRAPHIC: ABOVE: Gilat Omer crafted a megillah, or scroll of Esther, with calligraphy, papermaking, **silk-screening** and printing.

BOTTOM: Omer decorated the scroll, which reads from right to left, with fanciful drawings and designs.

LOAD-DATE: March 1, 1999

Document 1 of 1



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Ethnic NewsWatch
Cleveland Jewish News

September 20, 1996

SECTION: Vol. 65; No. 26; Pg. 17

SLI-ACC-NO: 1196CLDM 143 000067

LENGTH: 862 words

HEADLINE: From Gallnuts to gimels: The process of writing a **Torah scroll**.

BYLINE: Fine, Arlene

BODY:

From gallnuts to gimels: The process of writing a Torah scroll..

ARLENE FINE Staff Reporter

Ever since the first Bible rolled off Gutenberg's printing press, every generation has seen advances in the printing of text. Most recently, the fax machine, automatic copiers and state-of-the art **computers** have had a powerful impact on dissemination of the written word.

But there is a group of highly exacting, dedicated writers who eschew any modern printing device invented within the past 3,000 years. Torah soferim (scribes) have been handwriting Torah scrolls (the Five Books of Moses) in exactly the same laborious way since The Word was handed down to Moses at Mt. Sinai.

In talmudic times a scholar could not dwell in a village without a sofer s'tam (Torah scribe). Scribes were often poorly paid because it was thought if they became too rich they would leave their profession.

Torah scribes must be very pious men, live a fully Jewish life and love Torah. They cannot write any word in the Torah from memory but must consult the Tikkun Soferim, which contains traditional Torah text and the complicated rules and regulations, first described in the Torah, for writing a Torah scroll.

A Torah scroll can only be written on special parchment, k'laf, made from the skin of a kosher animal. These animals are not bred in order to provide k'laf; rather, their skin is selected because they were killed for food or else died of natural causes.

As the parchment is being made, a prayer is recited by the parchment maker saying this animal skin will be used for a sacred Torah scroll. K'laf is never made from fish skin because, notes the law, it would give off an unpleasant odor not befitting a holy document.

Once the kosher skin is obtained, it is soaked in clear water for several

days to make it soft, followed by a soaking in lime water for 18 days to remove all fat and hairs. Then the parchment maker puts the k'laf on a drying rack to stretch it and make it smooth.

The ink that touches the kosher k'laf must be kosher, too. The proper ink recipe is found in the Talmud and has been used for centuries.

Kosher Ink Recipe

Boil one pint water

Add 1/2 pint crushed gallnut powder

Add 1/4 pint crushed gum Arabic crystals

Add 1/8 pint crushed copper sulphate crystals

Add 1/8 pint crushed fine black carbon powder

Most of the ingredients are fairly easy to obtain, except for gallnut powder. Gallnuts are made when a gall wasp stings a tree causing the tree to swell. The gall lays her eggs in the gallnut. Kosher ink makers tap the gallnut to get the powder for the ink. This same ink is used in writing other kosher documents in **tefillin** (phylacteries) and **mezuzot**.

Once the sofer has the correct parchment, he is ready to lay down the law. Before he writes a single word, however, the sofer first says a bracha (blessing) because writing a Torah is a holy action. Then he's ready to take up his turkey quill, dip it in his kosher ink and begin working.

The scribe uses tools made of silver, gold, ivory or fine woods. No base metals such as iron, steel, brass, copper or bronze can be used in making or repairing a Torah scroll. That's because base metals are used for making weapons and nothing used for killing can be used in writing a Torah scroll.

According to precise rituals, the first word a scribe writes on a piece of scrap paper each day is "Amelak," Israel's ancient enemy. Immediately after writing this word, the scribe scratches it out to blot out the memory of evil.

There is also a prescribed protocol a scribe follows when writing God's name. The day a scribe writes God's name he goes to a mikveh (ritual bath) to make himself pure. Because God's name is sacred, the scribe uses a special quill and bottle of ink. A scribe can correct any mistake he makes on any word in the Torah except God's name. If God's name is miswritten, then the parchment is considered faulty and must be discarded.

Once the pages of a Torah are written, they are sewn together and attached to two wooden rollers called atzei hayim (trees of life). A scribe uses a silver needle, thimble and scissors to sew each piece of parchment called a yeriah. The gid (thread) comes from the tendon tissue extracted from the leg muscles of a kosher animal.

Clearly much work, love, ritual and respect goes into the writing of a Torah scroll. When Torah scrolls wear out from normal use, scribes repair and restore them. Every letter in a Torah must always be perfect.

As sofer Dr. Eric Ray writes in Sofer - The Story of a Torah Scroll, "A Hasidic rabbi named Uri of Strelisk said: 'The Torah is like the Jewish people. If one single letter is left out of a Torah, then it is unfit for use. If one single Jew is not part of the the Jewish people then they are incomplete. If two letters in the Torah are touching, then the Torah is unfit for use. If every Jew does not have his or her own special relationship with God, then the Jewish people are incomplete.'"

Article copyright the Cleveland Jewish News.

GRAPHIC: Photo, Zerech Greenfield completing the Torah scrolls

JOURNAL-CODE: CL

LOAD-DATE: August 17, 2001

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